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Office of University
Communications

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Mallory Baucom '19 Focused on Making Program a More Collaborative Effort

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Mallory Baucom, of Indian Trail, North Carolina, hopes that the research she conducted through the Gardner-Webb University Undergraduate Research Scholars Program, will make a difference for future GWU students.

Baucom, who graduates in December 2019 with a degree in psychology and a minor in discipleship studies, was one of 15 GWU students who received a research grant during the summer term. Students work 40 hours a week for five weeks on their projects, which they are required to present in a professional forum. Each one had a faculty mentor or collaborator who worked with them.

“My research topic was first-year programs and seminars and their effectiveness,” Baucom shared. “I chose this topic, because I have been a part of Gardner-Webb’s First-Year Experience (FYE) program for the past two years as a peer leader and as a co-representative on the First-Year Programs Committee. The first year of college is crazy, stressful, and very influential regardless of whether a person is a traditional student coming from a traditional high school or someone coming with transfer credit or dual enrollment. I wanted to help make the experience more enjoyable for students without making it any less effective.”

Peer Leaders are upperclassmen who co-teach the Dimensions of University Life (UNIV 111) and First-Year Experience (UNIV 101) courses, and make themselves available throughout the school year. “I love that I get to be in a position to help guide fellow



students along in their experience,” Baucom observed. “I also appreciate the professional development opportunities I have through being a peer leader. I think it has given me opportunities to grow as a professional and to positively impact other students.”

Baucom’s mentor was Jessica Herndon, former FYE director at Gardner-Webb. “She helped me navigate through some of the research and helped to connect me with other people and resources,” Baucom related. “I relied on primary accounts and case studies of FYE programs at other colleges and universities. The biggest challenge I faced was sorting through the sea of available information on FYE courses and programs to find the relevant information for my research.”

From her research, Baucom has created a proposal that she will present to GWU President Dr. William M. Downs, GWU Provost and Executive Vice President Dr. Ben Leslie and other administrators. “I think we have an opportunity to reach out to other offices and departments and make the first-year experience more impactful,” she stated. “The FYE is more than just one office and a director.”

Baucom plans to continue her education by earning a master’s in social work or public health. She would like to work as a school social worker or with the Department of Social Services in foster care. Her research pushed her out of her comfort zone, and she gained confidence when approaching professionals. “I have communicated with faculty at different universities because of this research,” she asserted. “I attended a conference where I was only one of two students there and the rest were faculty members. I am a better individual getting ready to enter the professional workforce because of my undergraduate research.”

[Learn more about GWU’s Undergraduate Research Program.](#)

Located in the North Carolina foothills, Gardner-Webb University is a private, Christian, liberal arts university. Gardner-Webb emphasizes a strong student-centered experience and rigorous academics to prepare students to become effective leaders within the global community. Ignite your future at Gardner-Webb.edu.